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1925

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BASIL BLACKWELL

OXFORD POETRY

1925

EDITED BY PATRICK MONKHOUSE
AND CHARLES PLUMB

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BY WAY OF PREFACE

BOOTLESS it were gratuitously to re-embark upon that unseaworthy old vessel, the problem of representation. A year ago, to be sure, the hulk was manned and put to sea by this poor annual's harder critics, amid much bedizement of verbal bunting and not a little semi-serious grape-shot. A gale ruffled Oxford teacups; a staid metropolitan journal stirred in the whiff and wind thereof. The collection was utterly unrepresentative of Oxford—or of the best Oxford; again, perfectly representative—or of the worst. The editors discreetly announced that, anyway, it wasn't meant to be; and the burgeoning tumult perished as in a nipping frost. Ourselves, we have always felt that an anthology should have a polemic, a core, a relationship prior to the bare contiguity of page. Such a nucleus may be supplied merely by unity of taste; of time, or subject; of purpose, like the greatest of all anthologies, Dr Bridges' "Spirit of Man." Here, we have had to start with no more than a geographical kinship: nor have we striven to maintain the idle paradox, that a common habitat implies a common outlook. And so any spiritual oneness, which critics may detect in this number, is to be regarded, or disregarded, as fortuitous. Out of a deal of copy, we have diligently drawn all such as seemed, of its kind, worthy. And the outcome of this should be that few will find nothing to content, everyone plenty to displease them. Only let no aggrieved author exclaim against us, 'I sent them in a

BY WAY OF PREFACE

dozen, and they chose the worst.' The laugh is against him. But, indeed, it is hard for any man to exercise a taste more catholic than his own. Convince yourself that Pope, or Whitman, or Maro, is the only poet, and you are disqualified as a judge of the excellence, in his own line, of any pygmy who does not flock the banners of the appropriate giant. And where we have ventured out of our secure provinces into the regions of guesswork in taste, we would assure our readers that we have chosen 'in meer simplicitie, and all for their delight.'

To Mr Gerald Duckworth we owe our thanks for permission to reprint Mr Acton's poems from *An Indian Ass*; also to Mr Basil Blackwell for Mr Greene's poems from *Babbling April*. Divers others of these poems have appeared in *The Weekly Westminster*, *The Oxford Outlook*, and *Poetry of To-day*.

Finally, to make something of a dedication: and there an end. An editor is, after all, a builder with other people's bricks, and there is little enough of our own labour in this building for us to be so presumptuous as to dedicate. Still, for what our service has been worth, we should like to inscribe it, in all deference and affection, to Harold Acton, beloved and magnanimous *duce* of poets, and our predecessor in this pleasant office. Would that we had been able to make it worthier.

P. J. M.
C. T. P.

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HAROLD ACTON

HILARITY

COME, let us sing the world's hilarity,
Now that a silence overspreads the hills,
Each crevice, muscle, wimpling in a haze,
Blue-ragged fustian of twilight: come
And crack the sky with laughter, mounting shrill,
Let it dissolve the æther, let it break
In bubbles, circles ever-bosoming,
As when a trout has troubled a still pool.

Scatter it like a hungry pack of hounds,
Worry and tear and grind it into strips,
Ravish and tread on it, then let it be
To crawl before us like the ooze of oil,
A worm of shame, a mean and squamous thing.

Hysteria, guide us! Let our laughter heave,
Swell shriek on shriek, till it engender fear
Like peacocks in abandoned palaces
Whose sharp and melancholy discords ring
And rinse like lightning through the vaulted roofs
At sunset hour, when skies are smeared with blood.
Come, drown the viol's pallid amber notes,
Submerge the fevered pluckings at the lute,
Let no soft rippling cadences be spilled,
But beat a riot out upon the drums.
Fescennine gongs shall kindle us to blaze,
And thus our fumes, well ballasted, will steer
Towards the placid stars and make them reel.

HILARITY

Our lives are cratered with great pocks and scabs,
Meticulously morselled into pangs,
Birth-scream, death-rattle, straggling years between
Of childhood and uneasy puberty,
Of adolescence and maturity,
Resolve tormented into slow decay,
Crabbed, argued, rheumatic, cough our lives away.
And some, less fortunate, cough up their blood.

Then let us sing the world's hilarity!
With plunging pistons let our laughter press,
Lumbering in massed squadrons, vitriol
To blister the anæmic orb of moon.
And there are many hours before the dawn.
The hilewort, nightshade, agrimony-wand
Surrender to the fingers of the breeze,
Lay bare their throats, let loose their floating hair.

Some luckless women bear their children blind
And some hare-lipped and others lunatick
With soft and fumbling brains and shifting eyes,
Who dandle curly flowers, their lolling tongues
Clicking and moist with unrestrained saliva.
Perhaps 'twere better that they were born blind,
Never to see the ugliness of man,
The mirrors of his noisome, clammy thoughts,
Like night-grown fungi pushing on the air,
But hold sweet music palpable, and sounds,
Tones, undertones: a paradise of hues,

HILARITY

And glowing forms in silk embroideries.
The silence, too, will seem a rhythmic motion,
A saraband for snow-white feet to tread,
And not a tortured cripple crouching low
Amongst the blotting shadows of his soul,
To nurse his agony with evil oaths,
The blight-scarred sickly vapours of remorse,
Sputtered and writhing from his twisted lips.

Were a revolver fired with loud report,
The only music welcome to our ears,
The poor blind man would tremble, clutch a chair . . .

Day after day the limbs of man are gnawed
And flayed by every manner of disease,
Eaten of lice, they seem the spawn of slugs,
And cancer slowly scrabbles at their vitals.
The small-pox ploughs their faces into ruts
And scurvy furrows, strange deformities
Distend and hunch them into monstrous shapes,
Like shadows gripping at realities,
To scrape a livid grave amongst the slime.
Some calcined ashen white with leprosy
Will scream for terror at their dreadful hands,
The touch of which would seem to cause decay
The roots they tear, the pappy fruit they pluck,
And prowling beasts will turn in haste and flee
Before their weary footsteps through the night.

HILARITY

Our quickened hearts have grated on themselves,
We groan with lappered morphews of the mind,
Our wanton mirth has frozen into sorrow,
And we had thought to fashion of our joy
Round crackling pearls to pelt our wine-drenched
loves.

But we were to have sung hilarity!

Our clowns are turned into tragedians,
And Pierrot's chalk-white face is crinkled up
With bitter weeping; roguish Harlequin,
His apple cheeks all wet and blobbed with tears,
Wanders the streets of Bergamo alone.
And floating through the utter silences,
Our sobs well hugely, spasms echoing
To jeer and mock at us, abortive fools,
Who came to sing the world's hilarity.

HAROLD ACTON

IN THE MONTH OF ATHYR¹

THESE ruins seem a womb of cringing air,
So thin that the ears tingle, flickering,
And every barren plant is withering,
Ready to snap, like glass, for sheer despair . . .
And through the ether mountains loom like bones
So hollow you could scrape a melody
Sounding like water from them, oozily
To this sun-stricken desert-world of groans.
The light is cruel: it is hard to read
The letters on these stones, but, lo, the words:
'*Lord Jesus Christ*' and further '*soul*'; what birds
Erased the script with droppings? and what weed
Has wrested from these crevices a home?
'*In month of Athyr*' . . . '*Lucius fell asleep*' . . .
His age is mentioned: he was young; and deep
Beneath the damaged parts, as in a foam
Of centuries I see, disfigured, '*tears*'.
Then '*tears*' again, '*for us his friends who weep*' . . .
Lucius was much belovèd, it appears.
In grey November . . . Lucius fell asleep . . .

¹The ancient Egyptian November (derived from a poem by C. P. Cavafy).

HAROLD ACTON
THE PRODIGAL SON

THE young man yawned with feigned inconsequence
Of manner; boredom exquisite; a fence
To hide the quick explosions in his soul.
He sucked at his surroundings, and the whole
Grim agony of his dull youth returned,
The blue fins of his sullen eyelids burned,
He could have mouthed a curse, an oath obscene:
For horror at the glib familiar scene
A clayey lump stuck blistered in his throat.
Chrysallic faces, garlic, myosote,
And rows of beans and artichokes, a field
Interminably patterned, jiggled and reeled
Along the corridors of memory.

‘Is childhood happy? dismal fallacy!
And yet I am not one of those who think
That lilies smell not, orange-flowers stink.’
Here had the best hours coolly leaked away
Like driblets from a tap, a disarray
Of tumbled hispid stars; a clean dry sleep
Of stunted senses, where he could not weep
For ignorance. And ever shone the moon;
The warm sky twinkled like a chopped lagoon.
‘This world is but a foggy circumstance,’
He thought, ‘where timid mortals must advance
To claim their rights and drain what cup of joy
It has to offer, now no longer boy
I’ll cease to play the rôle of Tantalus,

THE PRODIGAL SON

But leave this place, discharge a blunderbuss
Against my present drawling mode of life.
I'm still too young to bear the plague of wife,
And though 'tis true when all fine things be said,
I'm welcome to a partner for my bed,
To kiss a gaping throat of flaccid silk;
I fear her plump white breasts would hold no milk
To suckle babes on, after I had done
With kissing at her nipples; one by one
Each new-born babe would wither up and die.'

He picked his teeth, and fetched a windy sigh,
Informed his father of his bold resolve,
Who told him of the cost it would involve:
So, settling up accounts, he bade farewell
To all the damned of his domestic hell.

Oh *wagon-lits* and tickets bought from Cook's,
Surpassing all the fairy-tales in books!
Warm exhalations, streets with spicy smells
And oh, the Poe-like harmonies of bells!
Venice and Ruskin and *The Deadly Lamps*,
The pulsing cafés and patchouli'd vamps
With sticky flowers in their copper hair,
The languid music throbbing on the air!
The Watteau *fêtes galantes*, the bistre-brown
Sombrero'd poets, yet without a crown
To purchase food; the graceful unwashed hands
And flung-proud gestures of these Southern lands!
The tiny shiny shoes with pointed tips

THE PRODIGAL SON

And carmine-rouged pursed petulance of lips!
But all the while the young man's pockets burned,
And all the while he piteously yearned
For lucre; many azure nights he'd lain
With shirt-front soaked and squelching in cham-
pagne
And pleasures, money, all are volatile,
For after belching Pol-Roger the bile
Will wreak revenge.

And thus it came about
That when his full supply had given out,
The harlots would no longer share his bed;
Since he could pay no cash, they, laughing, said:
'One sucks the orange, throws away the peel.'
The young man's vanity forbade him kneel
As penitent before his father's glare,
Before the well-staged patronising stare
Of his familiar family—poor things—
How they would love to clip his phœnix-wings!

So he became a labourer and slept
In musty garrets where the grey mice crept,
With cobwebs and the gibbering of bats
And scuttling cockroaches, and lice, and rats
Who dragged their heavy bellies on the floor
Thud, thud and thud; the creaking of the door
In twilight cavernous, the broken pane
Through which the hiss and crackle of the rain
Would slant in rivulets across the planks,
The thunder tramped, the lightning played his pranks

THE PRODIGAL SON

Like a young leopard prancing from the skies
Divinely, whilst the tough wind slapped its thighs.

Through dismal days he sweated at the plough.
And half a crust beneath an apple-bough
Became his nourishment, and so he thinned
In figure-line; the sweltering east wind
And thick-flamed sun had bronzed his body quite . . .
And often through the oozing hours of night
He'd sing a sparkling catch of better times—
No longer pedant à propos of rhymes,
He'd hum or whistle: 'Gosh, she looks immense,
You never met a girl like sweet Hortense,'
With genuine emotion in his throat.
But soon he was reduced to pawning coat
And hat; dismissed for superflux of dreams
Or bathing on hot afternoons in streams
When there was corn to reap, or hay to store
In soporific barns; and all the more
He dreamt of silken harlots, velvet wine.
A tender farmer let him tend the swine.

With weighty flanks well caked in slime, a sow
Grunted and suckled farrow, whilst a cow
Lowed like a mellow snore; a mastiff whined
To demonstrate sheer vacancy of mind.
'Shall I arise and go?' tis not too late
To gain an entrance to my father's gate.'
The young man shook his head and muttered 'No,
Nor shall arise, nor to my father go.'
He had acquired a preference to dine
On scraps amongst the confidential swine.

W. J. ARKELL

UNDER A WILTSHIRE HEDGE

THE great hedge rises in silent towers
Of crab-bloom, pink against the snowy clouds;
On the high bank starry celandine crowds,
In a lilac mist of cuckoo-flowers.
Look through the gap, with apple-blossom fringed,
Over the April woods to the far blue downs,
Here and there in the changing sea of browns
The elms shew green, and young oaks purple-tinged.
Down the breeze comes a thrush's song of love,
Chanted deep in the hazels by the pond
And the song from the catkin-covered wand
Is answered in the blossom sprays above.
A rustle in the silver-poplar trees,
Like wavelets rushing up a shingly strand,
A silver glint of sun as each is fanned,
And waves and whitens with the passing breeze.
Gentle gusts go by, and others follow;
They flutter, sweet and scented, on the face,
Then down the daisy-dotted meadow race
To the kingcups in the golden hollow ...
'Tis all so lovely, I could linger here
The long day through until the eventide,
Till the cool shadows lengthen far and wide,
And the barn owl hoots from the thicket near:
I'd see the fox cubs from the hedgerow creep,
Still watch the blossoms falling, soft and pink,
When the last roan cow wanders down to drink,
And leaves the melting landscape sunk in sleep.

ARTHUR BRAINE-HARTNELL

PUSE DOWN—SUNSET

HE said: 'Look there.' Oh, that my heart could tell
And it be lost not to the years of Time.

The mist has risen up and left my rhyme;
She is too delicate a miracle.

The red moon—

A young slip—and every star,
More faint than night stars are,
Was hid too soon.

A car came up the road,
Making a little dawn upon the hill,
And broke the vision that the clouds bestowed.
It's broken still.

J. N. CAMERON

DWELLERS IN THE SEA

MY soul is some leviathan in vague distress
That travels up great slopes of hills beneath the sea.
Up from the darkness and the heaviness
Into a slowly gathering radiancy.
But wiser now, alas! to plunge and swim away;
For if he burst upon that mystic light of day,
Leviathan must gasp in lack of breath
And find what dwellers in the sea call death.
We hapless dwellers in the sea cannot be told,
No brave leviathan has ever back returned
To tell us how stupendous mountains rolled
Like porpoises, beneath a sky that burned,
How unimaginable light along his scales
Changed colour, till Leviathan was mailed in glory.
We have but rumours, unsubstantial tales;
And who would give his life up for a story?

J. F. COURAGE

SUNLIGHT THROUGH A CHESTNUT-TREE

DOWN in the leaves, fluctuant, floating,
The white light webs and chases.

Green-lit bough and blue-lit blossom,

Laces and traces

Over our faces

A thousand, sudden, spectral paces;

And wakes in me—that penetrative light—

Blind ante-natal dreams,

Things half-remembered, caught-at, lost,

Renaissant gleams,

Swift-falling beams

Of light on older hills and streams;

As one may see in a green, deep pool

Dusk and clear light

Constant merging, constant changing,—

Quieter than twilight,

Closer than night,

Yet without substance, seen without sight . . .

And after all, the world is small

Beneath a chestnut-tree.

Perhaps there's only you and me,—

Extraordinary me

Extraordinarily

Lying in light beneath a chestnut-tree.

CECIL DAY-LEWIS

SONNET

NOW, heart, be strong. Strip off, if there is any
Rag left of the peacock dress that once you wore:
Stand up, arrayed in finer verity.
Am I no better than the commonest zany
That I should preen and posture thus before
The mirror of my own stupidity?
Should stop my ears to rose and river telling
How beauty lives but in the hour of birth,
Then, by its very changelessness grows plain?
Laugh, world, or weep. He's gone beyond recalling
The boy who saw God in thy meanest earth.
O, to have back those lying days again,
When starry, chaotic night that is our youth
Had not yet paled into a dawn of truth.

CECIL DAY-LEWIS

AUTUMN OF THE MOOD

ON the heart's hidden verge
To mark where love is buried
Mourner lilies spring
Out of the stunted spurge,
And a small wind sings dirge
Under the last leaves fluttering

This autumn of the mood
Lives not beyond the rustle
Of its own leaves falling,
And soon, where lilies stood,
Brittle stalks in the wood
Shiver, like spectres at cock-calling.

JAMES FERGUSON

NIGHT FLOWERS

THE tall-stemmed candles brighten: the long room—
The hushed and shadowed chamber— fills
With radiance, as they burst the shredded gloom.
And in the table's gleaming round,
Far in its brown depths, luminous and cool,
Lie mirrored the pale saffron flames, that bloom
Like stately flowers, yellow-crowned,
By the dark waters of some peat-hued pool
Deep set among the heather-mantled hills.

O delicate blossoms, pallid daffodils
Born from the fiery heart of an unknown sun!
Not for a wonted season, not to the ultimate
Days of spring
Shall you endure, till the pulses of April quicken,
And a passionate May fulfils
The promise of flowering:
For midnight gathers, the long hours wait,
The shadows thicken—
Darkness will pluck you, flowers, one by one.

GRAHAM GREENE

I SHALL BE HAPPY

I SHALL be happy again, when you are gone,
Happy as the insentient stone,
Feeling no rain, nor any sun that shone.

And beauty will return again to common things,
And firmness to the heart's resolvings.
No fear will haunt the drift of fancyings.

The sunset will again be set of sun,
Loose hair, the hair undone,
And night, light's strands unspun.

But oh, in all my awkward swordsman's fence,
Knowing not whither nor whence
The sword flash from the mind, this difference.

I shall be happy again as the senseless stone,
But there will be gone
The zest from rain, all gold the past sun shone.

And beauty will return again to common things,
No unrest in the heart's resolvings.
No hope will haunt the drift of fancyings.

The sunset will be only set of sun,
Loose hair, the hair undone,
And night, light's strands unspun.

GRAHAM GREENE

SONNET

ALL these belong to youth; all these I hate:
The constant dreams that change and interchange,
Taking the whole world in a little range,
Yet creeping up to bed when it grows late;
And short-lived loves that yet are over strong,
When all the mind is one old weary faction,
Fearful of peace, more fearful still of action,
Fighting beneath no banner, with no song.

But age is like a wreck within a bay;
The sails are down: they do not feel the wind;
There comes no whisper from a foolish Spain;
The wheel is broken: there's no course to lay;
Only the sunlight like a fish gold-finned
Gleams through the water, laughs, is gone again.

ROSALIE GLYNN GRYLLS

IMMORTALITY

IS this our immortality?—to sow.
In eagerness with joyous morning hands
A crop whose harvest yield we may not know,
Only pass by the sunset-glowing lands
And linger there like children, bedtime come,
Then go, like them, reluctantly to sleep.
There will be talking when our lips are dumb,
And laughter at the feasts we shall not keep,
And sometime in the dark a voice will call
On one of our dead names; we shall not hear.
All that we were in life has passed to heirs
Unwitting of their heritage. They fall
In ruts and furrows we too learnt to fear;
We cannot warn them. All we were is theirs.

R. W. KETTON-CREMER

LIFE-IN-DEATH

I

WHAT if a man waking from troubled sleep,
Dazzled with strange light burning through the gloo
Should try in fear to shield his eyes—and feel
The linen swathing-bands
More strong than unrelenting steel
Hold to his sides the clutching, shuddering hands?

What if this man were lying deep
Not in the unplumbed catacombs of sleep
But in some dark place hollowed for the dead?

There comes no earthly glimmer in the tomb.

No earthly glimmer: but . . . if this light were shed
From something not of earth, nor quite of Death—
Some phantom Life-in-Death—
Would he not pray to be as the other dead,
Pray with chill gasping breath
No more in that grim place to linger on
With no faint hope that one
Might hear his cries thin-sounding through the mould
and stone?

LIFE - IN - DEATH

II

OR would he lie there quietly, thinking
That through his window shone the waning moon
Down in the western sky sinking,
About to plunge into the mists uprising
And turn their pallid coils to gold: that soon
Cocks will be crowing and challenging over the land,
Folk moving in the house and thrushes singing,
Rooks flying off to the fields in a noisy band—
And he would hear them?

Would this thought keep ringing
A joyous peal of bells in his crazed head
Till the light, fading to a little gleam,
Died—till he too was as the other dead:
Dead: yet not disenchanted of this dream?

EPITAPH OF THE FORMAL POET

I WHO lie here alone,
Rain plashing on my stone,
Loved the slow swell and chime
Of measured rhyme.

Rhyming the raindrops fall,
Singing some madrigal,
Tavern-catch, girl's light song . . .
All the night long.

JOSEPH GORDON MACLEOD

ELEGY ON A BANK CLERK DROWNED
IN THE SEA

(Inscribed to Keith Douglas)

If a great pine mountain wave came rumbling in
Across the bay on us, we would not have the time
To run away: nor if the sea
Gathered in pleated skirts, and spread out further,
Would these our little footsteps valiant be
To carry us back to the dipping line
Of cliffs there which the settling sunbeams turn to pink.

It was here that they found him.
Wet and disturbed, with the clammy folds of his summer overcoat
Lapping upon the frozen wind-bars of the sand
Like seaweed, like a great and swaying sponge.
Still in his clutching hand
A walking-stick was held, and at his throat
A tattered tie, where the grim dog-fish had been nibbling, swayed
In time with the swaying ripples
That on his hair and forehead played
As though with soothing fingers that old charlatan the sea,
Turned somewhat sentimental, had been trying
To mesmerise his body into stone,
White chalk-stone, on which hair and silk and tweed
Could simulate the weed,

ELEGY ON A BANK CLERK

And his thin finger-nails turn into limpet shells
At Ocean's old command,
On his stiff body, rocked alone,
Rocked alone and solitary, lying
In all that desert of thin-plastered sand.

He took train here, that here he might be dead.
All in a morning it was done.

He left his house in the great city after breakfast, while
the sun

Still had the bedclothes over his debauched and tousled
head;

Knowing but known to none,

He took train here: and swam to sea

With shoes and overcoat, as far as he could swim;

And who shall say what curious dog-fish smelt and fol-
lowed him?

Right round the cape he came; alive or dead he came:
Perhaps he swam: perhaps it was long after he was
drowned

That his still moving body

Like a strange motor-boat propelled by nothing put-
tered round

The headland. And who knows whether by day

Or night, beams caught the unresponsive ray

Of his unclosing eyes? where no flame burned

Nor was there tripod neither hearth to house the flame
When they discovered him. Perhaps some monstrous
fish,

ELEGY ON A BANK CLERK

Never been seen by fisher or by bather,
Found in those phosphorescent eyes a tasty dish?
Or that old solemn cormorant
Who sits like a well-sited statue carved in black,
Some poet or fine statesman with curveyed back,
By day (and night as well if we could see)
Upon the outmost rock, dived for his eyes, and did not
know
What jewels she was picking.
Or yet perhaps his clothes and face and hands were
prattled o'er
By some thin shoal of little things,
The whole crowd hardly licking
The lacquer from his skin, accustomed to clean so
The seawrack and the jetsam of the shore.

He took the train in the early morning: and before the
sun had mounted
Half to his throne, this boy was wasted.
Shame it may be, or grief of soul—
(He could not answer all for which he ought to have
accounted)
Purchased his ticket for him. He had tasted
Too bitterly the marmalade of life:
This was the toll
Peace asked of him before she let him pass.

He was too gentle to be criminal, alas!
What were his thoughts as the train brought him here?

ELEGY ON A BANK CLERK

He dared not think of cows and forests flashing

Past the square window: otherwise

He would have raved, or else repented.

Rather he turned his eyes

Inward for ever, till the terror of his soul was tented

Under the canvas of oblivion: and his fear

Turned to self-love.

How strange that not the splashing,

Not the cold sheets he cuddled into when he left the
shore,

Not the unsteady depths he kissed and crawled upon,
Could turn the cover back that shut him over,

It was so little, the disgrace

That would have made him blush a little, then forget,
They would have tried him, and forgotten

After a month only the plain weakness of his face

But even why they should remember him. And yet

Now his face has turned leprous with the fish-bites and
sea-puss

And his fleshed breasts are rotten.

Why did he thus cut off his heart to spite his brain?

—But let us turn again:

Let us go back to the encircling rocks and dress our-
selves.

Let our bare feet feel the bare ribs of golden sand

That keep us up. If only this fair bay had life,

We might lie on its warmest bosom, and

Finger its smooth and undulating shoulder:

For we have warmth and life.

ELEGY ON A BANK CLERK

But not so long ago he was laid there,
The ugly on the fair,
And on her lifeless unresisting side
The balance of the tide
Carried his breathless body to her bed:
Drugged on her unturned neck his heavy head
Sprinkling her skin with hair
Fell. Than such a lifeless pair
What heedlessness were colder?

JOSEPH GORDON MACLEOD
HUGIN'S SONG

From 'Odin and Gunnlöd'

[Hugin was the Bird of Memory, who sat by Odin's right hand].

T W O F O L D her grace is:

Over the silent hills she smiles
And in forgotten places
Where the drowsy bleating sheep
Slowly tell the lazy miles,
And in muffled grasses deep
Cigals sleep.

Squirrels seek their leafy hold
Where the lonely women weep.

Low goes the bee:
Slow bends the tree:

Where the reindeer chased of old
The rabbit chases.

Or, amid ice despairing white
Her rugged race is:

Where bleak the rock rattles, and black.
The river's pale green jade of light
Cleaves the blocks beyond its track:

Crack to crack
Spreads tumbling blankets on the floe:
Then as the silence closes quite
Between the rocks
An ice crone mocks
For ever forgetting where beneath the snow
The dead man's face is.

Twofold her grace is.

JOSEPH GORDON MACLEOD
MAUD ANSWERED

I *T is I who have come to bury you, bury you
Deeper, ever so little deeper.*

For see! I have come with wax and herbs,
Unguents of rhyme and rich emplasters
To embalm this fair dead body of love,
To preserve it against the creeper
Time, who disturbs
Even the wooden cell, against death and all disasters

You who were never a quiet sleeper
Shall at last have a grave that is deep enough.
Rigid below my preparations
Which from my caressing fingers
Drop and the perfume lingers
After the nostrils are closed,—
Which with caressing fingers of verse
I have gently spread along your body:
As I fix you, so shall you remain.

And whether you suffered pleasure
Or exulted in your pain,
Whether you loved or laughed
At all, I make no regard.
Your love would have been like your laughter, hard
And hard for ever shall either be
In these funny little tags I make for you.

Dust into dust:
Trust into trust:
So love goes into its coffin

MAUD ANSWERED

Like a baby into a bath.
And long after they have forgotten
The things you said or sang
They shall know you very well
Because of the songs I pounded up for you.

Softly, softly shall you be hammered down,
And with a rhyme in every nail
Stiffly shall you lie, unalterable
Like a fast-fixed rail,
As I have fixed you:
(And yet no less inflexible than you were to me)
Deeper now than you lie, poor sleeper,
Deeper, far deeper.

PATRICK MONKHOUSE
MIDLAND LANDSCAPE

Observed from a third-class corridor of the L.M.S.

TH E hay was falling swathed and ranked
In fields that swept my window by;
The train ran on, the couplings clanked.
Under a grave and clouded sky
I pondered melancholily.

It was not that I loved the less
This bright strange world that you were in;
That thinking on your loveliness
Had torn from common things the skin
Of an enchantment wearing thin.

I thought not on you; yet you were
About me, with me, and at one,
Informing every here and there,
Illuminating, like the sun,
The whole of your dominion.

The vivid world (as in a trance)
Flashed much obtrusive on my view;
Weighed with unused significance—
It was the world whereof were you.
All this and more than this I knew;
For cows and chapels, lanes and leas,
Knew you among us; and the day
Broke into smiling sun; the trees
Bowed to you, as you went your way
About the hedges and the hay.

PATRICK MONKHOUSE

TEMPERAMENTAL INCOMPATIBILITY

HAD I the heart to call you a damned fool,
To know that you and I would never do
 Being together all the long day through:
Lay down the thought of you, as I would a tool
That grew too hot to handle, or too cool;
 Rid me of this incorrigible you
Whose image looms importunate on the view,
Divinely gross, damnably beautiful—
Then, I'd be still; and never heed the wings
 Of Eros flying over me; I'd hear
 Green lapping silences and echoes pearled,
The stars' talk and the planets' whisperings,
 Such stillness would there be . . . But oh, my dear,
 God help us, it would be a poorer world.

CHARLES PLUMB

BRASENOSE OLD QUAD—MIDNIGHT

'And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me.'—*Genesis xxxii, 24.*

I. THE HOUR STRIKES

I

THE spectral hours fall
From Time's sepulchral womb.
Behind our ancient wall,
Grim like the tower of doom
That zones our life and all,
They are gathered to their tomb;
Unfettered into gloom
They shiver out and fall

2

Each to his station vowed
The stars are carpeted
Within a pall of cloud,
But writhe, as, it is said
This hour, each in his shroud,
A shudder shakes the dead;
They nod corrupted head,
And gibber half aloud.

BRASENOSE OLD QUAD

3

O elemental fear
In spangled robes! Your rush
From pole to pole I hear.
Your sombre pinions brush
The threshold of mine ear,
With tones that hautboys gush
In ocean-springs, where flush
Of day come never near.

4

What did I tremble for?
The silence keeps no sound.
Yet from the inmost core
Of heaven, the darkness found
A voice. A seraph bore
His wings to the profound;
Or else 'twas hautboys drowned
The hard beat of an oar.

5

Even the unsounded well
Of eldest night doth float
Such echoes out, to tell
That over heaven's moat,
To storm that citadel,
Crawls Time's slow spell-bound boat,
Whose oarage dimly smote
The void insensible.

BRASENOSE OLD QUAD

6

It is too leaden, the thought
Of Time's slow mastery:
It numbs the veins, that fraught
With wisdom though we be,
Time bears us past our port
Out to a tideless sea,
And all our empery
Must shiver into nought.

7

Our empery of might
And cognisance, and dreams,
With showers and sunlight,
Steamers and quinqueremes,
And pity, and delight
In books and football-teams,
Be jetsam on the streams,
Oblivious, unrequite.

II. THE VISION DAMNABLE

8

O U T, out beyond this core,
These fair but sombre walls,
In Time's train I will soar,
And pass into his halls
Of granite, with a floor
Of skulls, and seneschals
Time-grey at every door,
To guard them from footfalls.

BRASENOSE OLD QUAD

9

Here range but images:
No half-articulate throats
Gibe down the passages,
Mid ghosts of frogs and goats,
And gods, that shake their knees,
Nor the squat vampire gloats,
But on the salt air floats
A mirage of all these

10

Death's unreality
Teems in the prisoned space.
Lo, that eternity,
Death, dusted in his place,
As lustless gargoyles be.
The throne of Death enlace
Ygdrasil's roots, that tree
That shadows land and sea,
And moulders there apace.

11

And couched in weary lust
The sodden twilights through
Sits Time with Death's disgust
Enraptured; till they grow
Breeds fetid with distrust
And agony, and woe,
Of men that never know
Their parentage of dust.

BRASENOSE OLD QUAD

I2

Ay, therefore 'tis this drear
Disgust upon the night
Has furrowed me with fear.
For Time and Death grow white
Together to their bier,
That twin-birth did unite,
When brooded God's foul kite
Upon the waters sheer.

I3

And Time, diseased old man,
With wing that smelt of Death,
Has smeared a fairer span
From the live soul beneath,
Until it shudders again
At the corrupted breath,
That with fog cumbereth
The mirror of the brain.

III. RESURRECTIONEM MORTUORUM

I4

BUT the moon rides; the taint
Of Time and Death is gone.
The spirits that are faint
Tread their far roads alone.
She, like some stronger saint
New from oblivion,
Her steadfast hand draws on,
Hands firm, as carve or paint.

BRASENOSE OLD QUAD

15

Now call not every verse
Of heaven's rune profound
Mortal remembrancers—
Each gleam, or fingering sound,
Each stem-blown leaf that stirs
Above the phantom ground.
The trees shall not seem round,
Wood-carved inquisitors;

16

The seas shall not seem vast
Siberias of Time,
That passed them and repassed
In unrelenting rhyme,
Since worlds were born, aghast
To feel his minutes chime:
The fragrance of the lime
Shall not seem overcast.

17

The golden fortresses
Of every captain-soul,
There, where the word distress,
Unsacramental, stole,
Have purged themselves, and press
Battalions forth, their toll
To pay, nor win their goal,
But perish none the less.

BRASENOSE OLD QUAD

18

They perish, but like lives
In any other war,
Their death a vigour gives,
A manliness the more, . . .
To all that onward strives,
And all that strove before—
Brave bees still grouping store
For unresponsive hives.

19

More, to the sun the moon
Beholden for her beams,
Moored like a blank balloon
Athwart her own white streams,
Is handsel of high noon.
A kindly demon seems
To rob night of our dreams
With sunlight from the moon.

20

For of the sun and rain
And the wild mountain-peace,
The incense fumes again;
Of floods in beechen ease
Under a time-grey fane,
And Cithaeronian trees,
Dashed breathless by the breeze
On Inchmagranachain.

BRASENOSE OLD QUAD

21

An hour's eternity
Is deep as heaven's wells,
And beautiful to see
Eyes where eternal dwells
Delight won momently
From swallow-flights, and bells,
And tracks of deer in dells,
Made verdurous by July.

22

So doth a draught of wind,
Cooled in the land's cool breast,
Nursed darkly out of mind
Past many a tossing crest
Of seas, far glades behind,
Drive horror from the mind
By throttling Time oppressed.

23

Sail, moon, rise quietly,
Ride, moon, steal emerald
From ocean, steal ruby
From sunset. We have called
Thy face eternity,
Thy changing face, half-walled
This time by towers, stalled
Like priests against their sky.

BRASENOSE OLD QUAD

24

Changing delight goes deep,
And shallow's the sea of Death.
O flowers, no more we weep
That Time seals with his breath
Your fulfilled buds. O leap,
Ye hearts, this sky beneath,
That beauty carrieth
To morning, whilst ye sleep!

CHARLES PLUMB

SONG

TH E dog-rose and the marguerite
That on the brae do blow,
I should compare to someone fair,
Had it been long ago.

To prospects exquisitely planned
That range on left and right
I should refer, to credit her
With more than their delight.

But now I have forgot her face,
Her name I never knew:
How can I praise her charming ways
As I should like to do?

BENJAMIN ROSENBAUM

BROKEN LINES

NATURE cannot remain in rigid lines.
She has too much of beauty. She must bend
The stiff, stern postures of the oaks and pines,
And she must curve the fallen leaves; distend
The quiet sands to arcs in circling wind;
Or sag an arrow nosing on sky-free.
A cliff, defying mallets of the sea,
Will lose its bronze will and be crushed and thinned
Until it is a lifted cup, a bowl.
Nature is like a sculptor, with strange stone,
Who loves the broken: draperies wind-blown,
A torso with a breast. Her cosmic soul
Hungers for curves: a rising, wavering place,
A gothic arch of dawn, an oval face.

INTO A QUIET, LONELY PLACE

INTO a quiet, lonely place I come,
To a coign of cliff, a lane that drops to the sea:
The shrill voices of the winds have here
No place, nor the winds' fingers in my hair.
All that was before is strangely far,
And I have entered on a secret stillness:
A frightened hush falls on the throat that sang,
On the stream that babbled dreamily in the sun,
On whispering osiers and ivied stones,
There are a thousand timid eyes that watch
In the starked silence, only the monotone
Of gathered waves that break upon the shore
Below, lulls suspense with regular beat.
A sea-bird leaves his preening by the margin,
And rising through swift air, desolately
Wheels above the deserted shore, and now
Rousing from dreams I find my quiet nook
Beautiful with innumerable sounds:
The intimate brook resumes its idle chatter,
A little wind wakes among the withies;
The ivy-leaves that gleam like pools of light
Rustle softly over the stones, and even
The mosses are astir; a robin threads
The intricate hedge, and pipes a friendly song
Ere he flits mocking up the covert lane.

THE VILLAGE

If one came back now from the vanished past
Into this gleaming waste of sand and stone,
Where walls are hard and bright and angular
And the cold comfortable houses rise
Upon the slopes where there were trees of old,
How would he hold to that dim memory
That haunts the sly recesses of his mind,
Still and inviolate as a woodland pool?
And I have come back from the vanished past
To find my dream only a withered flower:
For here, where the harsh noon-day glare lights up
With pitiless whiteness the dust and desolation,
Here was shadowy coolness under the elms,
And under the elms that stood like sentinels
Along the unforgotten way, there fell
All through the dreaming summer afternoons,
Dim veils of light upon the low grey roofs.

ERIC SCHROEDER

MY LOVE & I SAT KISSING BY A BANK

MY love and I sat kissing by a bank,
Deep in the wood, deep in the summer morn.
Beside us hung a beaded waterfall,
Still to the eye, but carven to the ear
With quiet chuckles and the clink of bells,
Whose change and constancy my spirit, loth
To render all, half-lifting from the arms
Of a delight that begged another kiss
And still another, till the sense be blind,
Studied intently, anxious lest by Love
All might be drowsed and bowed in servitude
To one rich scene of earth, one mood, one sweet.
So to the lutany of that thin stream
I bent my ear, and on the wayward beech,
Whose wary sprays parried the common sun
Above our heads, with wide-eyed hope I looked,
Believing I had light enough from Love
To catch amid the throng of kindly saps
Some true continual Ground, and clasp some Form
Of mantling brightness that would serve me long:
(Still flares the lit Mind through the stress of days
Once wakened, and at dayflush stirring courts
The sole touch that can breed new glories thick
As winter stars.) Last, when the hour was dead
And calm Necessity unwound our arms,

1 Y LOVE & I

My Love, whose deepest joy, expressed in sobs
And trembling smiles, transcends the palaces
Of arching thought or word to which I climb
By how elate and sounding stairs, arose.
And walked before me swiftly through the wood.
What light was on her face I could not tell
Nor aught of her but only that she walked
Breasting the living air of solitude
As if I was a memory unlaid
And half unwelcome.

Stumbling in her wake

I ran towards our path, and tripped, and fell
Headlong upon the powdery earth, my nails
Dug in brown leaves and mould, and round my head
A fence of twisted roots sprung up to dance.
Why did she then not turn? I saw her move
Unhearing on, and vanish in the green.
What Being did I love? What had I lost?
What Law of Love or Life had I transgressed?

A Terror of the wood and the whole world
Struck through me, brain and limb, and cuffed me
dumb,
As I lay still and darkling on the path.
I felt the boughs of all the forest smite
Like lashes on my back, and dared not lift
My face complaining to the furious trees,
The voice, the glare, the cataract of wind.

MY LOVE & I

An unremembered span I spent thus reft
Of my strong self, when suddenly
The howling fled, the twisting path lay still,
The wood sprang back to sleep, and I was free.
Yet lest I dare forget, as home I went . . .
I heard no insect stir, nor any bird,
Sweet minstrel, gladdening other dells than mine
In all that wood, so quiet as a grave.

ROBERT SCOTT

'RANSCENDENTALISM

YOU played with me: then I grew very wise,
And learnt the worthlessness of haws and hips,
And those soft negroes, with enormous lips,
You bought; time even taught me to despise
The swinging sabre on my Empire thighs,
The cockle smallness of my crimson ships,
Which slid to bath-tubs on their firewood slips,
And postage-stamps, at last, and butterflies.

I read, marked, read again my Baudelaire,
And learnt to dance: made formulas and friends,
Invented Heaven, and wished that I were there,
Then thought of newer means to ancient ends,
And gaily played with ecstacy and pain.
I think, change, lose, forget: but you remain.

RONALD McN. SCOTT

TO H.N.R.

WERE we twain Saints, O debonnair,
Not so importunate I were:
Or sinners twain were we, i' the pit
Thou might'st at last thy love admit.
But now, alack, when earth we leave
Hell thee, me heaven, will not receive.

She slept one night within this room
And lingereth still her faint perfume.
So sweet, so sweet, so sweet that I
Can scarcely sleep for ecstasy.
God grant winged Time fan not away
This air until my burial day.

Lady, not proudly do I claim
My rhyme perpetuates thy name.
For well I know that it can live
Without what blazon I may give.
Rather thy name will make my rhyme
Immortal in despite of Time.

JAMES R. SUTHERLAND

CHANG TAKES THE ROAD TO ETERNITY

FIVE weeks lay Chang a dying, but he died,
And left a flat, shrunk body lapped in bed;
And women wrung their tiny hands, and cried,
And made obsequious clamour for Chang dead.
But Chang passed thoughtfully through a lacquered door,
The soul of Chang, a wisp of ether chill...

Nine days he groped in a grey mist, bleak and still,
That drank the warm air like a sagging sponge;
And in his ears there broke the hungry roar
Of hidden waters, the cold plunge
Of elbowing billows climbing some bouldered shore.
And at the last there blew a deathly breeze,
Such as will lift the clammy hair
Of some sick dreamer foundering on his knees
Down the warm tunnel of his dream. The air
Was streaked with fitful sighs. The mist uprose.

Alas! and how shall I disclose
The loneliness uncurtained by that breeze!
The bleak, uneager desolation
Filled the mind's compass like a dead man's eye.
No voice of bird twitched the mute, palsied air;
No daffodils shed their golden alchemy
On wet, bright lawns. But sickly gorse was there
Faint as mimosa when the moon is full.
Flinty that road, lit by no wayside flower,
Quick with no urchins straggling home from school.

CHANG TAKES THE ROAD•

So mile by mile Chang trudged, and hour by hour.
And at the end, beneath a rain-beat post,
An old bent man he saw, a yammering ghost.

‘Death,’ said the post, pointing the way Chang came;
But with a silent finger on ahead,
‘Eternity,’ it said.
Chang lingered plaintively to read that name.
He saw the white peaks of Infinity
Gleam in the air like carven ivory,
And stooping, whispered to that chittering thing,
‘Why are you waiting here? Rise, and escape!’
The grey lips trembled suddenly agape:
The wind stood still to listen while they thought—
‘Why wait I here?’—Lank fingers snapped and caught
The empty air.—‘Why wait I here?
Alas! I have forgot!’

And round the shoulder of a low-backed hill,
Chang heard a lapwing wailing faint but shrill.
Three times she called. And then the dreary wind
Froze to a final still.

JAMES R. SUTHERLAND

THE NEW PRELUDE

I BEING young, nor grown to man's estate,
Gazed overmuch into the Ultimate,
Parted red lips in droning psalm,
Fed on grey holy books in shuttered calm.

But I got over that, being no fool,
And made a shrill cult of the Beautiful.
I grew a lonely lily in a pot,
I bowed to Beauty that I reverenced not,
I had vast longings, nameless blank desires,
And beat upon my cage's finite wires.

And now that I am come to man's estate,
I live no more by any antique rule;
But dangling legs upon a sunny gate,
I gaze no more into the Ultimate,
Nor bow no longer to the Beautiful.

ERIC WALTER WHITE

PRAYER

I DO not pray at night before I sleep.
What should I say?
When I in solemn, rare, unbodied thought
Communicate with God I do not weep
My petty woes, at that which he hath wrought
Disconsolate.
Nor dare I beg and in the silent poise
Of eternal workings introduce the cry
Of my shrill voice.
In ecstasy I rest, lonely and great,
With mind sublime.
There is no Time, no Matter, and no Fate.
My thoughts upsoar and beat against the sky,
The Infinite.
Until at length, frightened, I can no more.
To the brute plane I fall from spaceless height
And my knees in fear and anguish cry,
Strength, God, oh! strength.